

crown itself, and the continued incarceration of the elector and the landgrave, intensified princely discontent. The presence of Spanish ministers and Spanish troops brought into play the force of national antipathy. The renewed attempt to negotiate a religious union by means of the Council, which a new Pope, Julius III., recalled to Trent, failed.

Charles was undoubtedly working for his own imperial interests and for the permanence of the imperial crown in his own family. Ferdinand should succeed him as emperor of a strong empire, imperially governed. But Philip should succeed Ferdinand, and the Habsburg-Spanish power should thus continue not only to rule Germany, but dominate Europe. His imperial policy had undoubtedly advantages for Germany. The princely oligarchy was fatal to the strength of the empire, and the miserable particularism which paralysed it for two hundred years was the only alternative to Charles' scheme of a strong imperial government. It may be said, therefore, that his policy was in a sense the best for Germany in the circumstances. On the other hand, the prospect of a Philip as Emperor of Germany was, as the sequel of his rule in the Netherlands was to show, the worst possible prospect. Religious bigotry and iron despotism would have been the upshot of it, with a revolution that would have reinstated the princes in their territorial sovereignties, without bringing political salvation to the empire.

Personal, national, religious motives thus prepared the way for the stroke by which the betrayer of the Protestant cause was scheming to rehabilitate it. Maurice appears to have been a pure opportunist, who occupies perhaps the lowest place, among the Protestant champions of princely rank, as a political speculator. He had played the traitor to Protestantism in favour of Charles, because it paid him. He now played the traitor to Charles in favour of Protestantism for the same reason. To talk of principle in such a case, as his apologists do, is to waste words and overlook plain facts. With him and his co-operators among the princes, the chief impulse to revolt was anxiety to secure their territorial power from the menace of a strong emperor. They could, however, count on the co-operation of religious and national motives^